

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8295

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 1693

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU'S REACTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: A) STATE 03927 B) STATE 032760 C) KINSHASA 1060 D) STATE
031692 E) KINSHASA 1474

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT MOBUTU UPON HIS RETURN TO KINSHASA HAS REACTED PROMPTLY TO DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT TO CONGRESS BY HAVING FON MINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL DELIVER ORAL DEMARCHE TO CHARGE. DIRECTOR GENERAL'S STATEMENTS OF DISAGREEMENT WITH REPORT WERE FRAMED AS "GOZ ENDORSEMENT OF AMBASSADOR KASONGO'S PROTEST" TO ASST SECTY MOSSE ON FEB 10. AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, REPORT'S REFERENCE TO NGUZA IS SOURCE OF SPECIAL IRRITATION. LEVEL AT WHICH GOZ HAS CHOSEN TO HANDLE MATTER HERE AND RELATIVELY MEASURED REACTION OF MOBUTU ARE, ON THE WHOLE, MILDLY ENCOURAGING REGARDING BOTH IMMEDIATE ISSUE OF THIS REPORT AND ALSO OUR LONGER TERM BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEBRUARY 15, I SPOKE WITH GOZ FON MINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL IDZUMBUIR AND RECALLED MY DELIVERY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR ZAIRE TO HIM ON JANUARY 31 (REF C). WHEN I SAID THAT OFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF REPORT HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY EMBASSY, DIRECTOR GENERAL ASKED THAT IT BE SENT TO HIS OFFICE.
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DOCUMENT WAS DELIVERED TO FON MINISTRY ON FEB 15, DAY PRESIDENT MOBUTU RETURNED FROM ALMOST THREE WEEKS TRAVEL ABROAD.

3. ON FEBRUARY 16, I WAS CONVOKED ON VERY SHORT NOTICE TO FON MINISTRY FOR MEETING WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL IDZUMBUIR. WITH COPY OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT IN HAND AND WITH UNUSUAL SOLEMNITY, IDZUMBUIR SAID PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD BEEN "VERY UPSET" UPON READING

THE REPORT. HE SAID PRESIDENT DID NOT AGREE WITH SEVERITY OF CRITICISM IT CONTAINED. IN PARTICULAR, MOBUTU FELT THAT LIBERALIZATION MEASURES SUCH AS ELECTIONS AND "OTHER POSITIVE STEPS TAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE "DURING PAST YEAR HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN SUFFICIENT EMPHASIS.

4. THEN STATING THAT HE WAS "GIVING A PERSONAL IMPRESSION," IDZUMBUIR SAID HE THOUGHT PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S MAIN REASON FOR BEING UPSET WAS THE PROMINENT PLACE GIVEN IN THE REPORT TO THE NGUZA AFFAIR. IDZUMBUIR SAID THAT SECTION GAVE A SPECIAL TONE TO THE REPORT WHICH WAS UNFORTUNATE, AND GOZ WONDERED WHY DEPARTMENT FELT OBLIGED TO INCLUDE IT. I REPLIED THAT HAD NGUZA NOT BEEN MENTIONED IN THE REPORT, THE REPORT AND THE DEPARTMENT WOULD SURELY HAVE DRAWN CRITICISM BECAUSE, AS HAD BEEN POINTED OUT BY HIGH USG OFFICIALS IN MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA AND AMBASSADOR KASONGO, AND ALSO IN EMBASSY'S DIALOGUE WITH GOZ, THE NGUZA AFFAIR REMAINED A LIVE ISSUE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP. I MENTIONED CONGRESS AND THE PRESS AS ELEMENTS WHICH CONTINUED TO EXHIBIT CONCERN ABOUT NGUZA AND ADDED THAT THERE WERE OTHERS, ESPECIALLY HUMAN RIGHTS SPOKESMEN BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE USG.

5. IDZUMBUIR REPEATED HIS ARGUMENTS REPORTED PARA 3, REFTEL C, TO EFFECT THAT REPORT SHOULD TAKE FULLER ACCOUNT OF IMPROVEMENTS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN FREEDOM OF PRESS AND SPEECH. HE ADDED THAT REFERENCES TO RELIGION WERE SOMEWHAT MORE BALANCED THAN OTHER SECTIONS BUT STILL GAVE DISTORTED IMPRESSION. FOR EXAMPLE, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE ASSERTED THAT PRIESTS THEMSELVES AS EARLY AS TEN YEARS AGO HAD BEGUN WILLINGLY TO MOVE TOWARD USE OF INDIGENOUS NAMES RATHER THAN CHRISTIAN ONES. REFERRING TO PRISON CONDITIONS, IDZUMBUIR OFFERED TO ARRANGE FOR EMBASSY REPS TO MAKE PERIODIC VISITS TO VERIFY THAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE BEING MADE. I ACCEPTED THE OFFER.

6. DIRECTOR GENERAL REFERRED TO KASONGO'S FEB 10 MEETING WITH ASST. SECTY. MOOSE AND SAID THAT HIS DEMARCHE TO ME SHOULD BE CONSIDERED "GOZ ENDORSEMENT OF KASONGO'S PROTEST." IDZUMBUIR THEN ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY FOR DEPT TO AMEND REPORT TO INCLUDE OR OTHERWISE TAKE ACCOUNT OF GOZ COMMENTS ABOUT CONTENTS OF REPORT. HE ADDED THAT THIS QUESTION HAD BEEN LEFT UNANSWERED BY REPORTS HE HAD RECEIVED FROM AMBASSADOR KASONGO. I REPLIED THAT NATURALLY EMBASSY WOULD REPORT FULLY GOZ REACTION BUT THAT ANY AMENDMENTS AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE OUT OF QUESTION SINCE ENTIRE GROUP OF 105 REPORTS HAD BEEN PRINTED AND RELEASED BY CONGRESS TO PRESS AND PUBLIC ON OR ABOUT FEBRUARY 7. I SUGGESTED THAT RATHER THAN LOOK AT REPORT IN NARROW FRAMEWORK OF SHORT TERM, WE SHOULD STRIVE TO BROADEN SCOPE AND DEAL WITH FUTURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP ON THIS ISSUE. I EMPHASIZED OUR SHARED INTEREST IN IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS WHEREVER IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED AND SAID THAT EMBASSY AND DEPT STOOD READY TO WRK CLOSELY

WITH GOZ ON CONTINUING BASIS TO MAINTAIN CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON SUBJECT. I SAID USG DOES NOT PRETEND TO HAVE ALL ANSWERS TO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS (AND WELCOMES OBSERVATIONS ON AMERICAN PERFORMANCE IN THIS RESPECT). AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT ACTIVE CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD MUST CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF US FOREIGN POLICY. IN THIS CONNECTION, I REFERRED TO DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER'S NEW ORLEANS SPEECH OF FEBRUARY 13. AT DIRECTOR GENERAL'S IDZUMBUIR'S REQUEST, WE HAVE DELIVERED TO HIM A COPY OF THAT ADDRESS.

7. COMMENT. SINCE IDZUMBUIR OBVIOUSLY WAS ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT MOBUTU IN MAKING ABOVE DESCRIBED DEMARCHE, IT IS CLEARER THAN EVER THAT MOBUTU HIMSELF IS VERY SENSITIVE TO ATTENTION WE ARE GIVING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ZAIRE. AT SAME TIME, CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE IS REASON FOR US TO BE MILDLY ENCOURAGED BY FACT THAT DEMARCHE WAS MADE AT IDZUMBUIR LEVEL AND ALSO BY RELATIVELY MEASURED REACTION TO THE REPORT ITSELF. EXCEPT FOR POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF NGUZA SUBJECT, WE DETECT GROWING GOZ WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS ISSUES THEMSELVES AND TO AVOID REACTING IN AN OVERLY EMOTIONAL WAY. NOW THAT KASONGO HAS DELIVERED WRITTEN DEMARCHE (REF A) AND WE HAVE RECEIVED ORAL PROTEST FROM IDZUMBUIR HERE, GOZ MAY FEEL THAT ESSENTIAL STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AND THAT ISSUE OF REPORT CAN BE ALLOWED TO REST AWHILE. HOWEVER, IF REPORT BECOMES LIVELY ISSUE IN PRESS AND ESPECIALLY IN ZAIRE IS SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL PUBLIC CRITICISM, WE SHOULD EXPECT FURTHER EXPRESSIONS OF "UPSET."
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